George H.W. Bush Presidential Records
Public Liaison, White House Office of

Jeavons, Kathy, Files

American Association / Ethiopian Jews

[OA/ID 06271-071]

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Collection/Office of Origin: Public Liaison, White House Office of
Series: Jeavons, Kathy, Files
Subseries:

OA/ID Number: 06271
Folder ID Number: 06271-071

Folder Title:
American Association / Ethiopian Jews

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Molly: Tell Sarah This was rejected

Went forward 3/13

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SCHEDULE PROPOSAL

January 25, 1989

TO: Joe Hagin, Deputy Assistant to the President for Appointments and Scheduling

THROUGH: Dave Demarest, Assistant to the President for Communications

FROM: Bobbie Kilberg, Deputy Assistant to the President for Public Liaison

REQUEST: To meet with representatives of adoption groups, agencies, and task forces; foster care groups; and individuals who have been involved in expanding the opportunities for adoptive parents and children.

PURPOSE: To emphasize the President's support of adoption as a positive alternative to abortion on the day of the NOW Pro-Choice March in Washington.

BACKGROUND: On April 9, the National Organization of Women, Inc. (NOW) will host a rally/march in Washington to protest the possible Supreme Court overruling of Roe v. Wade in the upcoming case Webster v. Reproductive Health Services. 75 womens organizations, many of which are mainstream, have endorsed and/or have agreed to participate in the march. In addition, a number of other political organizations including some gay rights organizations, have endorsed the march. A meeting with adoption leaders on the day of the march is one way to respond effectively to the demonstration.

There are over 2 million couples and individuals in the United States who are infertile and would like to build families through adoption. There are countless other couples and individuals who would like to adopt children for reasons other than infertility. In spite of the high demand for adoptive children, adoptions have remained at the relatively low level of 50-60,000 per year since 1982.

This disparity is a result of a number of factors, many of which have been the focus

of recent federal and state task forces on adoption. One of the major problems appears to be the unrealistic standards established by agencies for prospective adoptive parents. For the most part, agencies look for parents within a narrow age group, who are married, meet specific income requirements and are compatible with the cultural and ethnic background of the adoptive child. Another major problem is that a significant number of the children available for adoption are children with special needs (minorities; physically, mentally, or emotionally handicapped; sibling groups; and older children) and are difficult to place.

This meeting will focus on these aspects of adoption: expansion of adoption prospects and services; foster care and how to increase permanent placements; unplanned pregnancies and the consequent need for counseling, economic and health support services to carry a pregnancy to term; and increased efforts to expand the adoption of children with special needs.

DATE & TIME: April 9, 1989; Morning

LOCATION: Roosevelt Room

DURATION: 30 minutes

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Secretary Sullivan

Representatives of:
Select national adoption organizations and advocacy groups
Sectarian and non-sectarian adoption agencies
State and federal adoption task forces
Government adoption services.

OUTLINE OF EVENT: Arrival of President
Photo Op
Remarks by the President
Q & A with the President
Departure of the President

REMARKS REQUIRED: Brief Remarks

MEDIA COVERAGE: Photo Op with Press Pool

2/22 Ext. 3391

Robert Cabelly is out of the country until March 1st

She will run by David Miller - NSC (Ambassador Miller) Director of Africa *

Robin Sanders

Rm 323

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet
(George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
01. Memo	Joe Hagin from Bobbie Kilberg, re: administration's position regarding Ethiopian Jews. (1 pp.)	02/20/89	P-5	

Collection:

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Open on Expiration of PRA
(Document Follows)
By JL (NLGB) on 2.14.05

Date Closed:	4/22/2003	**OA/ID Number:**	06271-071
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Re-review Case #:	2005-0084-S	**Appeal Disposition:**	
P-2/P-5 Review Case #:		**Disposition Date:**	
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AR Disposition:		**MR Disposition:**	
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RESTRICTION CODES

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Joe - Pls
Cos

Bobbie -
please
run by
NSC for
whether they
think we
should
do.
If yes
go ahead
XXO

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMO TO: Joe Hagin
FROM: Bobbie Kilberg BK
DATE: February 20, 1989
RE: THE ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION REGARDING ETHIOPIAN JEWS

I have been advised by Robert Cabelly, Director of African Affairs in the NSC, that the President tries to downplay his past role in gaining the release of Ethiopian Jews and his continued efforts in that direction so as not to jeopardize the lives of those who are left behind. However, he continues to be very interested in the plight of the 8,000 Jews left behind in Ethiopia and to work quietly towards gaining their release.

I have informed John Cohen, Association of Ethiopian Jews representative, of the President's wishes to keep his involvement in this matter as quiet as possible. They are aware of the delicacy of the negotiations and have assured me that a meeting with Mr. Elazar, if it were to take place, would not be publicized in any press releases or newsletters from their respective organizations.

2/24 per Robbins does not recommend a meeting at this time

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SCHEDULE PROPOSAL — February 20, 1989

TO: Joe Hagin, Deputy Assistant to the President for Appointments and Scheduling

THROUGH: David Demarest, Assistant to the President for Communications

FROM: Bobbie Kilberg, BK Deputy Assistant to the President for Public Liaison

REQUEST: Meeting with Mr. Rachamim Elazar, chairman of the National Council of Ethiopian Jews in Israel

PURPOSE: To demonstrate the President's continued support for bringing about the release of the Jewish families left behind in Ethiopia after "Operation Moses" in 1985.

BACKGROUND: Since 1985 the President has played a key role in seeking the release of Ethiopian Jews. In 1985 during Operation Moses when 10,000 Ethiopian Jews were airlifted to Israel via the Sudan, he met personally with the Sudanese Prime Minister and persuaded him to release several hundred of them who were detained in Sudanese refugee camps.

The President has maintained an interest in gaining the release of the 8,000 Jews who were left behind in Ethiopia. Last October, he asked President Traore of Mali as a "personal favor" to intervene on behalf of Ethiopian Jews.

DATE & TIME: Early March

LOCATION: Oval Office

DURATION: 15 minutes

PARTICIPANTS: The President, Mr. Rachamim Elazar

OUTLINE OF EVENT: The President greets Mr. Elazar
Discussion
Mr. Elazar departs

REMARKS REQUIRED: Informal Remarks

MEDIA COVERAGE: Closed to Press

Bob Gates
National Security Council

American Association for Ethiopian Jews

National Resource Center, 1505 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037 (202) 223-6838
Chicago Office, 2789 Oak St., Highland Park, IL 60035 (312) 433-8150

PSh David D. about this

Nathan Shapiro, President
Dr. Graenum Berger
Founding President
1270 North Ave., Apt. R6
New Rochelle, NY 10804
Dr. Howard Lenhoff
Immediate Past President
304 Robin Hood Ln.
Costa Mesa, CA 92627
Honorary Congressional Board
Sen. Rudy Boschwitz
Sen. Alan Cranston
Sen. Howard Metzenbaum
Rep. Gary Ackerman
Rep. Benjamin Gilman
Rep. Stephen Solarz
Executive Board
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Henry J. Everett
Jane Fellman
Peter Jackson
Arlene Kushner
Sandy Leeder
Sheldon Migdal
Henry Rosenberg
Lisa Rosenblatt
Susan P. Schechtman
Marvin Zimmerman
Support Groups
Ethiopian Jewry Committee of North CA
P.O. Box 13086
Oakland, CA 94661
Eugene Assoc. for Ethiopian Jews
2550 Portland St.
Eugene, OR 97405
Washington Assoc. for Ethiopian Jews
P.O. Box 23036
Washington, DC 20026
Michigan Assoc. for Ethiopian Jews
1556 Jones Dr.
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
Organization for Ethiopian Jewry
8027 Vicksburg Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90045
Rescue Committee for Ethiopian Jews
5225 Prosperity Ln.
San Diego, CA 92115
AAEJ New York Area Chapter
35 West 87th Street
New York, NY 10024
Friends of Ethiopian Jewry
97/5 Bar Kochba St.
Jerusalem, Israel

February 3, 1989

Bobbie Green Kilberg
Deputy Assistant for Public Liaison
Room 128 OEOB
Washington, D.C. 20500

- he is the spokesman + umbrella organization for all Jewish groups

Dear Ms. Kilberg:

Mr. Rachamim Elazar, chairman of the National Council of Ethiopian Jews in Israel, will be in the United States from February 15th through mid-March. He would very much like to meet with the President during his visit. At the meeting, Mr. Elazar would hope to present the President with a gift, in appreciation for his crucial role in bringing about the rescue of several hundred Ethiopian Jews in 1985, and would seek the President's continued support for bringing about the reunification of divided Ethiopian families.

As you may be aware, within the last decade a movement was launched to bring the Ethiopian Jews to Israel. Motivated by the increasingly harsh policies of President Mengistu coupled with the onset of drought and famine, this movement reached a peak in 1985 when 10,000 were airlifted to Israel via the Sudan in an initiative known as "Operation Moses".

News of the Operation was leaked to the press prematurely, and Sudan (or Ethiopia?) caused it to be terminated at its midpoint, leaving several hundred Ethiopian Jews stranded in Sudanese refugee camps. Vice President Bush met personally with the Sudanese Prime Minister and persuaded him to allow their release.

An estimated 8,000 Jews were left behind in Ethiopia, most of whom were women, children, the elderly and infirm. Of these, almost half were separated from immediate family members who were evacuated during Operation Moses.

Re Pres. met Elazar in Israel after Operation Moses (Joshua)

Contributions are tax deductible
A non-profit organization incorporated in 1969

American Association for Ethiopian Jews

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Jerusalem, Israel

Since Operation Moses, Mr. Bush has maintained great interest in and support for the plight of those Jews remaining in Ethiopia. In October, he asked President Traore of Mali as a "personal favor" to intervene on behalf of Ethiopian Jews (letter enclosed).

Mr. Elazar, who immigrated to Israel form Ethiopia 18 years ago, is an intelligent and articulate leader of his community. He has met with many world leaders including several members of Congress as well as Assistant Secretary of State Richard Shifter.

Enclosed please find information about Ethiopian Jewry in general and Mr. Bush's involvement in particular. We appreciate your assistance and look forward to hearing from you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

John Cohen

John Cohen
Special Representative

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2/6~
Ambassador
David Miller
X 3393
X Robert Cabelli

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

October 5, 1988

Mr. Jonathan M. Cohen
11409 Commonwealth Drive
Apartment T-2
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Dear Jonathan:

Following is an excerpt from the Vice President's letter to President Traore of Mali concerning the Falashas:

> I wish to bring to your attention a matter of great importance to me. What happens in Ethiopia is followed closely by many Americans. Many Ethiopian practices -- its abysmal human rights performance, its acceptance of foreign troops on its soil, its destabilization of neighboring Sudan -- seem unAfrican. Along with many Americans, I am concerned about the plight of Ethiopian citizens, especially the Ethiopian Jews who wish to emigrate to Israel. America has always supported the freedom of movement and the right of people to seek a better way of life. With this in mind, I ask a personal favor of you. In your conversations with Ethiopian leaders, I ask that you encourage them to relax restrictions on emigration and the rights of people to move freely. This humanitarian action would be a first step in improving Ethiopia's human rights performance.

I hope this information can be useful to you.

Sincerely,

Don Gregg

Donald P. Gregg
Assistant to the Vice President
for National Security Affairs

VP letter dated 3 Oct 88

FAMILY REUNIFICATION FOR ETHIOPIAN JEWS MUST BE HIGH ON AGENDA

BY WILLIAM RECANT

Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev's *glasnost* policy holds promise for Soviet Jews who wish to immigrate to Israel. On the other side of the globe, another Marxist leader, Fidel Castro, has made arrangements with the Reagan administration to allow thousands of Cubans to join relatives and friends in the United States.

The picture is not bright for another, smaller group of people who wish to flee religious and social persecution in a communist society. Ethiopian Jews, a community that numbers approximately 15,000, mostly women, children and elderly, desperately want to leave the African nation and be reunited with relatives who have already settled in Israel. The Marxist regime of Col. Haile Mengistu Mariam has refused to let them go.

Yet in recent days, there have been signals from Addis Ababa that Ethiopia may finally be prepared to open its doors to Western concerns. These signals must be responded to with dispatch: The issue of family reunification for the remnant Beta Yisrael community must be placed high on the agenda.

William Recant is executive director of the American Association for Ethiopian Jews.

An Exodus Uncompleted

In 1984 and 1985, Ethiopian Jews by the thousands fled persecution and the ravages of drought, crop failure and civil war. Despite the perilous journey through hostile terrain, they escaped to refugee camps in neighboring Sudan. More than 8,000 Ethiopian Jews were flown from the camps to Israel in a then-secret Israeli-American program, code-named Operation Moses. However, several thousand died of starvation and disease during this modern-day exodus, and the airlifts were abruptly halted in the spring of 1985.

It is four years since Operation Moses began, yet the problem is far from resolved. The remaining Jews of Ethiopia are even more desperate to be rescued from a land they do not consider their home. Besides the original reasons they had for leaving, many are now separated from husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters. In Israel, more than 1,500 Ethiopian Jewish youngsters are "orphaned by circumstance." For these children, the anguish and concern over parents left behind is terrible. Family structure is crucial to the culture of the Ethiopians; reunification is an obsession, very real, very understandable. Ethiopians now in Israel know how bleak life is for relatives and friends trapped in Ethiopia. They fear that they may never see their loved ones again.

> ***"The time is ripe for American Jewry to awaken to the critical condition facing these divided Jewish families."***

More than 17,500 Ethiopian Jews now reside in Israel. This community shares a consensus that not enough is being done to get their people out. And they are right. It's clear that a strong humanitarian appeal to the Ethiopian government is needed to free this small pocket of African Judaism. Just as occurred during Operation Moses, worldwide humanitarians will work to resettle Ethiopian Jews in Israel. But first, the Ethiopian government must agree to let them go. The issue is now one of family reunification. Even the Soviet Union has allowed for reunification on this basis and the United Nations supports measures to bring together families caught in such political entanglements.

As Time, and A Community, Expires

The time is ripe for American Jewry to awaken to the critical condition facing these divided Jewish families. At this crucial moment, as Ethiopia seeks an improved relationship with the United States and other Western states, the American Jewish community must urge our representatives in Congress and the incoming Bush administration to act swiftly to reunite Ethiopian Jewish families torn apart by war and discrimination and famine.

The silence of the past is criminal. American Jewry must take up the challenge. They must urge representatives of this government as well as the government of Israel to make every effort to help reunify divided families today before it is too late. Ethiopian Jews have been a forgotten people for centuries. Unless something is done quickly, this unfortunate remnant locked inside northern Ethiopia will become just a sorrowful, vanished page in history.

LETTERS

Greece's Shame

Neusner Replies to Mike

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet
(George Bush Library)

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THROUGH: David Demarest, Assistant to the President for Communications

FROM: Bobbie Kilberg, BK Deputy Assistant to the President for Public Liaison

REQUEST: Meeting with Mr. Rachamim Elazar, chairman of the National Council of Ethiopian Jews in Israel

PURPOSE: To demonstrate the President's continued support for bringing about the release of the Jewish families left behind in Ethiopia after "Operation Moses" in 1985.

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DATE & TIME: Early March

LOCATION: Oval Office

DURATION: 15 minutes

PARTICIPANTS: The President, Mr. Rachamim Elazar

OUTLINE OF EVENT: The President greets Mr. Elazar
Discussion
Mr. Elazar departs

REMARKS REQUIRED: Informal Remarks

MEDIA COVERAGE: Closed to Press

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